The THACKERAY ALPHABET

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THE
THACKERAY ALPHABET

By W. M. THACKERAY

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A COLLECTION OF LETTERS OF W. M. THACKERAY, 1847–1855

THACKERAY'S LETTERS TO AN AMERICAN FAMILY

A PORTRAIT OF W. M. THACKERAY, ESQ. Engraved by FRANCIS HOLL, from a Drawing by SAMUEL LAWRENCE

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THE THACKERAY ALPHABET

Written and Illustrated by
WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

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HOW THIS ALPHABET CAME TO BE WRITTEN

NEARLY one hundred years ago my grandfather, Major James Chadwick, 59th Foot, was living with his wife and family at Sherborne, Dorset, where young Mr. W. M. Thackeray was wont to visit his friend Mr. Macready, the actor, also residing in that town.

One day, when Mr. Thackeray was calling on my grandparents, he was ushered in on a scene of woe—a small boy sobbing in a corner, with a stern mother in attendance. Kind Mr. Thackeray inquired the cause of the child's grief, and was informed that Eddy would not learn his alphabet. "No wonder," said Mr. Thackeray; "it is such a very dull thing to learn." Then he asked for some notepaper, folded it carefully, and then and there composed and illustrated the following "entertaining book."

The alphabet was probably written about the year 1833. My father, the late Colonel Edward Frederick Chadwick, formerly of the 59th and 33rd Regiments, was born 3rd March, 1829, and would most likely have begun studying his ABC between the ages of four and five. Though we often heard the above story from his lips, it never occurred to any of us to ask the date of the episode.

How the frail little book survived the fingering of Eddy, who possessed a brother and five sisters, is a miracle. But I am sure that at least Eddy himself was allowed to learn from it, for to the end of his long life (he died in 1915, within a month of his 86th birthday) he was continually quoting the verses, especially the one underneath " P," which must have particularly taken his childish fancy. He counted his Thackeray Alphabet among his most cherished possessions, and it still is kept in the little blue silk check case made for it by his careful mother.

ONE OF EDDY'S SEVEN CHILDREN

" BALLINARD,"

DORCHESTER,

June 1929. DORSET.

Great A, it is an Animal & called an Alligator
Ils countenance will show you, that its of
a cruel Natur.

B. b

B. is a BED and in it, a young gentleman
doth lie;
All I can say, I'd rather that he were there
than I.

C. c.

C is a Cow, & many people say
She gives at least twelve quarts of
milk a day.

D. d

D. is a dunce
He's been whipped more than once

E. e.

E. stands for Eddy. & for him I took
Pains to compose this entertaining
book.

F. f.

F is a Frenchman, he looks wondrous eager
To swallow his frogs & to sip his Soup meagre

Who comes here?
G. Grenadier!

H L I.

H. is a Huntsman, the fox is in view
So he follows & hollows his lusty halloo.

I. i

I. idler had some slaps upon his bott[illegible]
And sorely he repented when he got 'em.

J. j.

J. is a Judge. - his Lordships in a fury
Most likely with the Gemmen of the Jury.

K . k

K . is a king - a king upon his throne
His hand a sceptre holds his head a crown

L. l.

L. is a Lion covered o'er with gore
Which on the desart shore makes horrid roar!

M .m.

M. is a Med'cine nasty foul & black
May Eddy ne'er have cause such stuff to take.

N. n

N: is a Nose - happy the man who sh knows
So red, so long, so beautiful a Nose.

O. o.

O is an Oysler, open, fat, & sweet
Scolloped or raw they're very good to eat.

P. p.

P. is a pimple - 'tis a thing which grows
Sometimes upon a luckless parson's nose.

Q. q.

Q. from her crown you'll guess to be a Queen
Though not the greatest beauty ever seen

R. r.

R. is a rogue - as by his face you see
I fear there still are many worse than he

S. s.

S is a sow and when his life is taken
Happy the farmer who shall have his bacon

f.

T is a trout - the very best of fishes
When living handsome but when dead
delicious.

U. u.

U. unicorn was beat about the town
When fighting with the Lion for the crown.

V. v.

V. is a virgin, beautiful and young
As ever swain adored or Poet sung.

W w.

W's a Welshman. when I was from home
Unto my house he came & stole a
Marrow bone

He who a picture on this Sheet expects
Is disappointed X is only X.

Y. y.

Y. is a youth who at the evening hour
Singeth sweet ditties in his ladies bow'r.

Z. z.

Z. is a Zebra such as in the Zo-
-OLOGICAL Society they shew. —

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